

Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac

A Critical History of Operations in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania from the Commencement to the Close of the War, 1861-1865.

By WILLIAM SWINTON.

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THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

End of the Conflict—A Flank Attack Decides the Victory—The Army of the Potomac Retreats—Disorderly Retreat to Washington—Confederates Almost as Demoralized.

While these events, in the opinion of the historians, were going on at Bull Run, Johnston, from their headquarters, near the center of the line, marked the outbreak of battle on their left flank, and listened eagerly and anxiously for similar sounds from the direction of Centerville, resulting from the prescribed counter-attack in that quarter by the Confederate right. "To my profound disappointment," adds the Confederate commander, "I learned, just about the time that the force on the left had been driven back by the advance of the Federals, that my order to Gen. Ewell had miscarried." Judging too late for the effective execution of the contemplated move, Beauregard found himself, as he states, "forced to depend on new combinations to meet the enemy on the field upon which he had chosen to give us battle." (27) Leaving Ewell, Jones, Longstreet and Bonham at their positions along the lower forces to make demonstrations against the Federal forces opposite and prevent their going to reinforce McDowell's right, the reserves, consisting of Holmes's two regiments and the battery, Early's brigade, and two of Bonham's regiments and a battery, were immediately ordered up to support the Confederate left flank, now seriously imperiled. Jackson, who with his brigade of five regiments had been in reserve not far from Stone Bridge, went up just at the time Evans and Bee and Barton, who had been holding the advance of the Federal given way, and were attempting to rally and reform their troops on the plateau. (28) At this juncture, Beauregard and Johnston reached the field, and it required their best personal efforts to hold the men to their work. This accomplished, Beauregard took command on the field, while Johnston went to the rear to hurry up reinforcements from his army arriving from the Valley.

MORE THAN A MILE GAINED. The Confederates had now been forced back a mile and a half, and the Union force had cleared its front completely across the Warrenton road; the Stone Bridge was uncovered, and McDowell drew up his line on the crest gained, with Heintzelman's Division (brigades of Wilcox and Howard) on the right, supported by part of Porter's Division, and the army under Palmer, and Franklin's Brigade of Heintzelman's Division; Sherman's Brigade of Tyler's Division in the center; and Gregg's Brigade of Tyler's Division on the left. His line of battle consisted of about 6,500 men, 13 pieces of artillery, and two companies of Cavalry.

The definite possession of this plateau now became the prize eagerly contested by the opposing forces. This light is on three sides, and the Union army, which was drawn up in a line within a few yards of each other, and half a mile to the south of Stone Bridge. Rising to an elevation of quite 100 feet above the level of Bull Run at the bridge, it falls off on the sides to the level of the inclosing streams in slopes which are gentle, but furrowed by ravines of irregular direction and depth, and shaded with dense growth of young pines and oaks. The general direction of the crest of the plateau is oblique to the course of Bull Run. Around its eastern and southern base an almost unbroken fringe of low growth pines gave excellent shelter to the Southern sharpshooters. To the west, adjoining the fields, directly across the crest, on both sides of the Stony road, extended a broad belt of oaks, in which, during the battle, regiments of both armies met and contended for the mastery.

Having obtained possession of the ridge, the main effort of the Union forces was made to work around and envelop the left flank of the Confederate line. This was a maneuver which promised well, but, unfortunately, the army was hardly in a condition to execute it; for, worn out in the hot day's work, it had already lost its cohesion, and errors were committed of which the Confederates speedily took advantage.

GRIFIN'S BATTERY LOST AND RECOVERED. The batteries of Griffin and Ricketts, which had played a brilliant part during the conflict, had been ordered by Gen. McDowell to the top of the ridge on the left, so as to take advantage of the crest gained. These batteries were supported by the Fire Zouaves and Marines, while the 14th N. Y. was directed into a thicket of wood on the right to protect that flank. The quick eye of Jackson, who held position in front, saw the exposed position and feeble support of Griffin's battery, and he threw forward the 33d Va. to take it. Nor till they emerged from the thicket of woods, not 1,000 yards distant, was his danger known; and when Griffin was about to open on them, the Chief of Artillery, Maj. Barry, restrained him from making, conceiving they were the 14th N. Y. that had been thrown into the woods on the right in support. Jackson's men made a dash on the battery, and the supports giving way, took possession of the guns, many of the cannoneers being shot down and the horses killed. Fresh forces were, however, brought up, the Confederates were driven back, and the guns retaken.

THE BATTLE SWAYS. Beauregard then advanced the right of his line in an attempt to recover the plateau and the guns. This effort was partially successful, but it was met by the fresh rally of the Union forces, who, in the face of battle repeatedly surged backward and forward, with varying success to each combatant. Finally towards 3 o'clock in the afternoon, a fresh accession of force having arrived from the rear, the army of Johnston, Beauregard made a determined effort to recover the disputed plateau. The attack was vigorously made and since the close of the day, the whole open ground—the batteries of Griffin and Ricketts being again and finally

captured. Still, the Union line, though shaken and giving ground, did not yield the field. A fresh effort was even made to extend the right so as to envelop the Confederate left.

ARRIVAL OF EARLY. While the movement was in execution, the brigade of Early, the rear of the army of the Shenandoah, reached the field from Manassas Junction, and coming in on the Union right flank (exposed and badly placed), (29) determined the action. Many of the regiments, especially on that wing, were already badly used up, and had lost



LONG BRIDGE OVER THE POTOMAC AT WASHINGTON. Note.—Many of those who took part in the battle of Bull Run returned to Washington over this bridge. The plan was afterwards laid down on the basis and taken up at night, to prevent rebel cavalry, that hovered about the Capital, from crossing.

their organization. The fire from the fresh arrivals doubled up this flank and drove it back in confusion, which, presently, involved the whole line, extending even to the left, which had hitherto shown more consistency, and was even advancing. The whole force was thrown back in disorder, across and over the ridge, and over Young's Branch, and, in extreme confusion, made in all available directions towards Bull Run. Every effort was made to rally the troops, even beyond the reach of fire, but in vain. The battalion of Regulars, alone justifying the traditions of military discipline, made a brief stand on the margin of the bridge, and then, exposing the whole retreating mass to capture or destruction—a fate which was averted by the arrival of Gen. McDowell, who ordered back Miles's troops to their position, and by the inactivity of the Confederates. Nothing like systematic pursuit was made, although a small party of cavalry followed the retreat as far as Cub Run. By sundown most of the army was left behind the Centerville ridge. There was, however, no question of halting there; for the condition of the army and the absence of supplies left no alternative but to fall back; and during the night the army made its way to the Potomac.

COL. SHERMAN CHECKED THE ROUT. The retreat was marked by great disorder, all semblance of military organization being lost. Many did not even stop to reach the camps south of the Potomac, but fled by the bridges and ferries to Washington. This, however, was at length stopped by Col. Sherman, who posted strong guards at the points of passage.

The Confederate loss in this action was 1,852, of whom 269 were killed and 1,438 wounded. The Union loss must have been nearly as heavy, but the exact figures are not known. The key-point was a wounded left in Beauregard's hands, numbered 1,400. It is hardly necessary to seek any explanation of the events of Bull Run, other than what arises from the consideration of the simple fact that the battle was fought at all. McDowell's plan of battle was well considered, and even bold; but the failure of execution was inevitable. Owing to the absence of any thing like a staff, the attack was made in a most fragmentary way, without order or ensemble. Since the close of the day, the writer of these pages has had with Gen. Johnston a very full conversation on this action; and of the question of the general management of the battle of Manassas, he spoke as follows: "The key-point was a flat, bare crest. It was here that the Federals made their attack. But they were made by a brigade at a time. The position was really hardly tenable, and had an attack been made in force, with double line of battle—such as any Major-General

in the United States service would now make—we could not have held it half an hour, for they would have enveloped us on both flanks."

COURAGE NOT LACKING. So far as regards the mere physical fact of fighting, which was at the time the important question, there was nothing of which the Union soldiers could be ashamed—they stood up to it with the blood of their race. The fault lay in the inherently vicious organization of the force—in the great number of miserable subordinate officers, which in turn was the natural result of the method of raising regiments. Yet, with all the faults, the action was for a time almost a success, which shows that the Confederates were really in not much better condition. Their chief point of advantage was in the better class of officers created by this system. Nevertheless, the victory long hung in the balance, and might readily have declared itself on either side. (30) At the close of the action, the Southerners were hardly less demoralized than their opponents, so that the idea of pursuit was not to be entertained. On this point, again, the testimony of Gen. Johnston is of the highest value. "In our condition," said he, "pursuit could not be thought of; for we were almost as much disorganized by our victory as the Federals by their defeat. Next day, many, supposing the war was over, actually went home. A party of our soldiers, hearing that a friend lay wounded 20 miles off, would start out to go and see him; or that another acquaintance was dead, and they would go and bury him. Our men had in a larger degree the in-

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ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY.

Gen. McClellan's Splendid Work in Developing the Efficiency of the Army—The Plan of the Work—The People's Service by Bull Run.

When the army that so lately had gone forth with such high hopes returned from Manassas shattered and discomfited to the banks of the Potomac, where men saw there was that had suffered worse defeat than the army—it was the system under which Bull Run had been fought and lost. The

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tallies were formed and forwarded to Washington, when, by the terms of the service of the provisional troops had expired, their number had been more than replaced by fresh levies enlisted for three years or more.

HOPE BECKONED TO McCLELLAN. Gen. McDowell vacated the command of the army without forfeiting the respect of his countrymen; for, while he had lost a battle, there was an instinctive consciousness that he had been the victim of circumstances rather than of any miscarriage of his own. And now there could be no doubt regarding his successor; for the general and consenting voice of the North pointed to the young General who had just concluded his campaign in the mountains of West Virginia as the desired leader of the army. Gen. McClellan, accordingly, was summoned to Washington the day after Bull Run, and placed in command of the disorganized forces that had returned from that untoward campaign, and of the rapidly arriving regiments which the "Pious North" was pouring down from all directions to Washington. Out of these elements, an army was first of all, to be fashioned.

Gen. McClellan brought to his high trust proofs of talent which, though not sufficient to show him a proper captain of a great army, were yet enough to inspire the best hopes of him. He had served with distinction in Mexico, had studied war in Europe, was in the flower of his youth, and, above all, had just finished a campaign that, by its success amidst general failure elsewhere, seemed to furnish a promise of the prestige and prophecy of victory.

The young chieftain threw himself with the utmost ardor and energy into the work of molding into form an army adequate for the Nation's needs. It was a colossal task; for it was necessary not merely to build up an army, but to make the model on which the army should be built. The military traditions of the United States, confined to the single campaign in Mexico, afforded no groundwork for the organization of such a military establishment as was now demanded for the portentous task of the country. The Regular Army kept on foot previous to the war was limited by law to not 20,000 men. But its whole internal organization had been inherited by secession, and it did not even form a cadre on which it was possible to build.

McCLELLAN'S MATERIAL FOR AN ARMY. The force around Washington of which Gen. McClellan assumed command on the 27th day of July numbered about 50,000 men, of whom less than 10,000 were Regulars, with nine imperfect field-batteries of 30 pieces. It still retained the provisional brigade-organization given it by McDowell; but the utter collapse that followed Bull Run had made it a mob rather than an army. Desertions had become alarmingly numerous, and the streets of Washington were crowded with ragged officers and men absent from their stations without authority and indicating by their behavior an utter want of discipline and organization. (1) To correct these abuses a stringent system of military police was at once adopted, and this measure was followed by an immediate improvement in the morale of the troops. The root of the evil, however, lay deeper, and it was really by system governing the primary organization of regiments and the appointment of their officers. (2) Though Gen. McClellan was unable to strike at this, he endeavored, as far as might be, to remedy its results, and Congress having passed a bill authorizing the President to dispense with the services of inefficient officers, the Army of the Potomac was soon needed of several hundred worthless wretches of shoddy discipline.

SYSTEM IN ORGANIZATION. The problem of the best organization to be given a newly-formed army is one that to this day has received no final solution; and whatever principle be adopted, the original organization will be apt to require modification very soon after entering upon a campaign. The division, composed of two or more brigades, is, however, a permanent unit, and Gen. McClellan, after the regiments had been organized into brigades of four regiments each, and the brigades had been somewhat disciplined and instructed, formed divisions of three brigades each. (4) But, in a mass of above 60,000 men, it has been common, since the time of Napoleon, to create from the assemblage of two or more divisions the higher unit of the corps d'armee. At the present principle of organization, Gen. McClellan was in favor of the formation of corps; but he wished to defer its practical application until his division commanders should, by actual experience in the field, acquire the requisite training to fit them for commands so important, and until he should have learned who of his divisional officers merited this trust. (5) There was much to justify this course, for there are few men able to command a body of 30,000 men; (6) and it is worthy of note that it was not till the Army of Northern Virginia had seen 18 months of service that those at the head of military affairs in Richmond organized corps. (7) This hesitation, however, proved

(1) McClellan: Report, p. 9.  
(2) Prince de Joinville: The Army of the Potomac, p. 17; Leconte: Guerre des Etats-Unis, p. 55.  
(3) After the institution of the qualifying examination for officers, many have been dismissed, or their resignations accepted, within eight months.

In just view regarding this, as regarding most other matters relating to the war, the people were much in advance of the Government; and one of the most curious instances of this is a formal memorial at this time addressed to the President by "property holders of New York," regarding the system of officiating regiments. This paper, marked by the soundest good sense, was published in the New York Journals of Aug. 1, 1861. It pointed out the necessity of a suitable supervision has not been extended by Government to the officiating of the volunteer forces; that the principle of allowing officers to choose their own officers, and officers their own Colonels, is fatal to military discipline; that political, local, and personal interests have had far too much play in the selection of officers; that the duty of the Government is to select competent commanders, and from placing in responsible military positions those most capable of filling them, without regard to any thing but their qualifications," etc., etc.

(4) McClellan: Report, p. 11.  
(5) Ibid., p. 53.  
(6) "An army corps rarely contains more than 30,000 men; and officers, even among nations who have the greatest number of troops, such a command is a great burden, and few men are capable of making it creditably." DuRoi: Strategy and Tactics, p. 81.  
(7) The corps organization was created in the Confederate service immediately after the battle of Antietam.

(Continued on sixth page.)

Short Histories of Notable Regiments

By COL. WM. F. FOX.

FIRST MAINE CAVALRY.

J. I. GREGG'S BRIGADE, D. M. GREGG'S DIVISION, CAVALRY CORPS.

COMPANIES.	KILLED AND DIED OF WOUNDS.			DIED OF DISEASE, ACCIDENTS, IN PRISON, &c.			Total Enrollment.
	Officers.	Men.	Total.	Officers.	Men.	Total.	
Field and Staff.....	3	..	3	..	..	..	31
Company A.....	2	6	8	..	29	29	266
B.....	..	7	7	..	35	35	264
C.....	2	10	12	..	23	23	234
D.....	1	12	13	..	22	22	220
E.....	4	17	21	..	30	30	233
F.....	1	19	20	1	28	29	251
G.....	..	19	19	..	27	27	260
H.....	1	19	20	..	29	29	215
I.....	..	11	11	..	24	24	221
K.....	..	20	20	..	36	36	247
L.....	..	7	7	..	36	36	223
M.....	1	12	13	2	19	21	230
Band.....	..	..	..	..	3	3	...
Totals.....	15	159	174	3	341	344	2,895

BATTLES.	K. & M. W.	BATTLES.	K. & M. W.
Middletown, Va., May 24, 1862.....	3	White House, Va., June 21, 1864.....	1
Manassas, Va., Aug. 28, 1862.....	1	St. Mary's Church, Va., June 24, 1864.....	17
South Mountain, Md., Sept. 14, 1862.....	1	Gurley Farm, Va., June 25, 1864.....	1
Louisa C. H., Va., May 2, 1863.....	1	Pickett, Va., Aug. 9, 1864.....	1
Brandy Station, Va., June 9, 1863.....	1	Deep Bottom, Va., Aug. 14, 1864.....	1
Aldie, Va., June 17, 1863.....	8	Malvern Hill, Va., Aug. 16, 1864.....	4
Middleburg, Va., June 19, 1863.....	11	Charles City Road, Va., Aug. 18, 1864.....	3
Gettysburg, Pa., July 3, 1863.....	1	Reams' Station, Va., Aug. 25, 1864.....	1
Shepherdstown, Va., July 16, 1863.....	9	Yellow Tavern, Va., Sept. 29, 1864.....	1
Manassas, Va., Oct. 15, 1863.....	1	Boydton Road, Va., Oct. 27, 1864.....	16
Dahlgren Raid, Va., March 7, 1864.....	10	Bellefield, Va., Dec. 10, 1864.....	1
Todd's Tavern, Va., May 8, 1864.....	2	Deatonville, Va., March 31, 1865.....	27
South Anna, Va., May 10, 1864.....	2	Deatonville, Va., April 6, 1865.....	7
Ashland, Va., May 11, 1864.....	9	Sailor's Creek, Va., April 6, 1865.....	4
Meadow Bridge, Va., May 12, 1864.....	1	Farmville, Va., April 7, 1865.....	2
Hawes Shop, Va., May 28, 1864.....	1	Appomattox, Va., April 9, 1865.....	7
Cold Harbor, Va., June 2, 1864.....	2	Pickett Duty.....	2
Skirmish, Va., June 19, 1864.....	1	Place Unknown.....	11

NOTES.—This regiment sustained the heaviest loss, killed in action, of any cavalry regiment in the entire army. Besides the actions mentioned, it participated in several in which it lost men wounded or captured. Like all cavalry commands the First Maine lost many who were captured while on outpost duty, or while foraging and raiding within the enemy's lines. Of these, 145 died of disease while in Confederate prisons.

Colonel Douty, a brave and gallant officer, was killed while leading a successful charge at Aldie, Va. At St. Mary's Church, Va., the First Maine made a desperate fight against great odds, losing 10 officers and 56 men, killed, wounded, and missing—out of 260 who were engaged. Another hard fight occurred at the Boydton Road; and at Cat Tail Run—March 31, 1865—the regiment sustained its severest loss. In September, 1864, the First D. C. Cavalry was consolidated with it, bringing its numbers up to 1,800 men.

FIFTEENTH KENTUCKY INFANTRY.

CARLIN'S BRIGADE—JOHNSON'S DIVISION—FOURTEENTH CORPS.

COMPANIES.	KILLED AND DIED OF WOUNDS.			DIED OF DISEASE, ACCIDENTS, IN PRISON, &c.			Total Enrollment.
	Officers.	Men.	Total.	Officers.	Men.	Total.	
Field and Staff.....	4	..	4	..	..	..	13
Company A.....	1	13	14	..	8	8	110
B.....	..	10	10	..	17	17	89
C.....	2	12	14	1	15	16	98
D.....	..	13	13	..	13	13	91
E.....	..	12	12	..	8	8	95
F.....	1	20	21	..	13	13	91
G.....	..	15	15	..	10	10	95
H.....	..	11	11	..	9	9	85
I.....	1	12	13	..	9	9	91
K.....	..	10	10	..	11	11	94
Totals.....	9	128	137	1	113	114	952

137 killed—14.5 per cent.  
Total killed and wounded, 516; died in Confederate prisons (previously included), 10.

BATTLES.	K. & M. W.	BATTLES.	K. & M. W.
Chaplin Hills, Ky.....	82	Resaca, Ga.....	6
Stone's River, Tenn.....	14	New Hope Church, Ga.....	3
In Action, May 16, 1863.....	1	Kenesaw Mountain, Ga.....	5
Tullahoma, Tenn.....	1	Atlanta, Ga.....	6
Hoover's Gap, Tenn.....	1	Shepherdsville, Ky. (Guerrillas).....	1
Chickamauga, Ga.....	14	Lebanon Junction, Ky. (Guerrillas).....	3

Present, also, at Missionary Ridge; Buzzard Roost; Peach Tree Creek; Jonesboro.

NOTES.—Mustered in December 14, 1861, and ordered immediately to the Army of the Cumberland, where it was assigned to General O. M. Mitchell's Division. In the summer of 1862, Mitchell's troops marched through Kentucky and Tennessee to Huntsville, Ala.; thence, with Buell's Army, on the campaign incidental to the pursuit of Bragg, marching north, across Tennessee and Kentucky, to Louisville; and thence to Perryville, Ky., where the battle of Chaplin Hills was fought. The regiment was then in Lytle's Brigade, Rousseau's Division, McCook's Corps, and sustained a fearful loss in that battle, its casualties amounting to 66 killed, and 130 wounded; no missing. The three field-officers, Colonel Pope, Lieutenant-Colonel George P. Joutett, and Major William P. Campbell, were killed in this battle; two of the line-officers also lost their lives there. The Fifteenth carried itself through this bloody action with a cool gallantry and steadiness of movement which elicited strong words of praise in the official reports of that action.

At Stone's River, the regiment lost 10 killed, 32 wounded, and 18 missing; Forman, the "Brave Boy Colonel," being among the killed. At Chickamauga, then in Beatty's (1st) Brigade, Negley's (2d) Division, Fourteenth Corps, the regiment lost 5 killed, 42 wounded, and 15 missing. In October, 1863, it was placed in Carlin's (1st) Brigade, Palmer's (1st) Division, Fourteenth Corps, in which command it fought at Missionary Ridge. During the Atlanta campaign, this division was known as Johnson's Division. After the fall of Atlanta, the regiment was assigned to garrison duty. Mustered out January 14, 1865.

EDITORIAL NOTE: The above pages are reproduced from Col. Fox's famous book, "Regimental Losses." Other pages, giving short histories of notable regiments, will appear from week to week. It is hoped the appearance of these short histories will stimulate comrades to send in material for the preparation of more complete histories of their respective regiments than have yet appeared.